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Superintendent

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ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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HORNE RELEASES SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDY SHOWING \$200 MILLION PLUS FUNDING SHORTFALL

PHOENIX (Wednesday, April 14, 2004) -- Tom Horne, State Superintendent of Schools, released a special education cost study, prepared every two years in compliance with A.R.S. § 15-236.A.

“These studies have shown for a number of years that special education categories are under funded. This can result in funding inequities for those school districts that receive more than a proportionate share of special education students. In future years, as the economy turns around and revenues increase, the legislature will need to look at fully funding these special education categories. If they were fully funded, school districts would be able to provide the full array of services for special needs children,” Horne said.

Horne referred to a range of categories with great differences in the amount they are under funded. “The under funding ranges from \$2,743 per child for autism to \$28,820 per child for visual impairment,” Horne said.

In addition to studying “Group B” amounts, which is the category for more significant disabilities, the study for the first time covered “Group A.” Group A includes less severe disabilities, and additional categories the legislature added to Group A, that are unrelated to disability. “The total under funding for Group B is \$63 million, and the total under funding for Group A is \$150 million,” Horne stated.

In fiscal year 2000, the Joint Legislative Study Committee on Special Education and Regulations was convened. The final Committee report included a recommendation that an audit be conducted for the purpose of identifying the actual cost of student program categories included in Group A, and not just Group B as had been done previously.

The study this year for the first time included additional costs of administration associated with general education activities, an item that was mistakenly omitted in cost studies performed in previous years.

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